



FIRST PERSON Knowledge Brings Health

Volunteers teach their communities about health issues



Photo: ZIHP

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Frederick Chisha enjoys teaching others how to live healthier lives. He volunteers as secretary for his neighborhood health committee in Lubunda, a rural village in northern Zambia’s Mwense district. “I like teaching people, and seeing my work have a positive result on someone’s life,” he says.

Frederick and his fellow volunteers are part of a USAID effort to strengthen rural health care. The program has been a success for Frederick and his neighbors, who receive materials and training from USAID, and then pass their knowledge on to other groups of volunteers in surrounding neighborhoods. Among other things, the volunteers teach about a range of subjects, from how to keep drinking water clean in order to prevent diarrhea to the need to clear high grass or drain stagnant pools of water to reduce malaria. They also encourage community members to listen to “Our Neighborhood,” a radio program that discusses better health practices.

“One of our biggest successes has been to identify our area’s most serious problems, and determine the action we need to take to solve these problems,” said Frederick. “Finding the problem is the first step in solving it. As we see the benefits, we all want to do more. Our neighbors got together and made bricks for area health posts after we identified a need for these posts, and we’ve already started building them.”

The number of neighbors Frederick and his fellow volunteers see each day has dropped since he started working with the neighborhood health committee. They have shown them how to recognize a variety of symptoms, when and how to treat them, and how to take preventive measures. “So many of our friends and family can now treat themselves for simple problems like diarrhea, or they know to go directly to the clinic for serious problems. I am seeing fewer and fewer people, and that means our efforts are working.”

For Frederick, the greatest benefit he has seen is in the health of his own family. “Now I know many ways to improve my family’s health, and keep them healthy. I have greater control over my family’s well-being. Knowledge is power.”